

6 July 2023

[REDACTED]

REF: OIA-12873

Dear [REDACTED]

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 9 June 2023 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) relating to the He Tohu Huarahi Māori bilingual traffic signs programme. I will answer each of your questions in turn.

- 1. The effect of Bilingual road signage as opposed to single language road signage on driver recognition and comprehension.**
- 2. Any estimates on the likely increase in traffic accidents received by your department due to a policy of introduction of bilingual road signage.**
- 3. Any studies or reports on the impact on visiting tourist road safety by the move to Bilingual road signage.**

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency undertook research to identify international precedents for using bilingual traffic signs, especially where a second language has been introduced into monolingual contexts.

The research found that drivers may initially need an extra fraction of a second longer to fully comprehend the message displayed with the sign when te reo Māori is placed above English text. However, the research notes this effect is brief and recedes with familiarity and is mitigated by good design. We have followed best design practice to mitigate safety risks, including using different font sizes, colours, and positioning to clearly differentiate between the two languages.

Waka Kotahi also undertook research to determine whether there were any safety disbenefits accompanying bilingual traffic signage. It found that there were no more deaths or serious injuries as a result of establishing bilingual traffic signs. Bilingual traffic signs are used safely in many countries and are considered 'standard' in the European Union. In some locales bilingual signs were introduced to improve safety among visiting tourists or were introduced to enhance tourist travel experiences.

There is no evidence that bilingual signs lead to an increase in the number of deaths or serious injuries where this has been measured. These include locales where the commonly spoken language was placed below the indigenous language.

These research reports are available at:

- <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/research/notes/005/>
- <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/research/research-notes/005/005-bilingual-traffic-signage.pdf>.

4. The estimated cost of the policy of the introduction of bilingual road signage.

As at 23 May 2023, a total of \$1,040,269 has been spent on the He Tohu Huarahi Māori bilingual traffic signs programme.

Subject to Ministerial decisions to change the rule, following consultation, Road Controlling Authorities will install bilingual signs when new signs are needed (e.g., when a new road is built) or when existing signs need to be replaced. This approach minimises any costs associated with introducing bilingual traffic signs.

In line with Waka Kotahi policy, this response will soon be published on our website, with personal information removed.

If you would like to discuss this reply with Waka Kotahi, please contact Ministerial Services by email to official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Katie Mayes

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